

Navy relaxes some COVID-19 rules

BY NANCY MONTGOMERY

Stars and Stripes

Sailors who have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 can now make some port calls, often go mask-free and deploy without quarantining beforehand, the Navy has announced.

“With more than a year operating in the COVID environment, we have gained significant expertise in mitigating and preventing the spread of COVID-19,” Vice Adm. Phillip Sawyer, deputy chief of naval operations for operations, plans and strategy, said in a statement. “Now with vaccines and CDC scientific data, we are able to relax many of the procedures we put in place and still provide for the health protection of the force.”

The rules apply to personnel on ships, submarines and aircraft, Sawyer wrote in a servicewide message issued Monday. Fully vaccinated personnel will be allowed port calls in designated “safe haven” ports, including in Guam, Bahrain, Japan and Spain, and use on-base gyms, commissaries and other services.

They can also go mask-free and stop social distancing in most situations.

Masks will still be required for medical and dental care providers when treating patients, on public transportation and for those joining a crew underway, regardless of immunization status.

Sailors diagnosed with COVID-19 in the past three months who have antibodies will also be able to skip the 14-day quarantine before deployments, the message stated.

Unvaccinated sailors who don’t have antibodies for COVID-19 will still be required to comply with previous quarantine and testing protocols.

The pandemic was particularly disruptive on ships and submarines, where social distancing in tight quarters is all but impossible. Crews had been required to board ships early for quarantine ahead of deployments, adding two more weeks to time away.

Once deployed, ships avoided most port calls. Some stayed at sea for 10 months.

That followed the mass infection of some 1,200 sailors, including one who died, on the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt in March 2020.

The Navy is now seeing the military’s highest vaccination rate and the lowest number of COVID-19 cases, Sawyer wrote. More than 230,000 Navy and Marine Corps personnel have been fully immunized, he said.

“We must continue to pursue full vaccination and apply best health protection measures both at home and at work to sustain and improve upon this performance,” Sawyer said.

Marines, who routinely deploy on Navy ships, have been less willing than sailors to get vaccinated. Nearly 40% of the 123,000 Marines who had the chance to receive the vaccine by April had declined it, USA Today reported, citing Pentagon figures.

None of the fully immunized sailors and Marines have been hospitalized to date for COVID-19, the Navy said, highlighting the operational importance of widespread vaccination.

“The science is pretty clear, vaccinations are key to best protecting our sailors,” Sawyer said. “The more sailors that are vaccinated, the better for them, their families, the Navy and the nation.”

NATO issues warning on Russia’s Ukraine behavior

Stars and Stripes

NATO has warned that Russia is continuing with a “pattern of aggressive behavior” toward Ukraine by stationing large forces near their border and restricting navigation in the Black Sea.

Earlier this year, Russia deployed more than 100,000 troops to the border region, raising concerns in the West that Moscow intended to invade its neighbor with whom it has been at odds since the seizure in 2014 of Ukraine’s Crimean Peninsula.

“While Russia has pulled back some troops, tens of thousands remain in and around Ukraine, as well as significant amounts of weapons,” NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Tuesday during a visit to the alliance’s Brussels headquarters by Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas.

Moscow continues to back eastern Ukrainian separatists in a war that the United Nations estimates has claimed thousands of lives.

In April, Moscow announced that it was pulling back its forces from the Ukrainian border, claiming they had been conducting routine exercises. But it remains unclear how many troops and gear were left behind during the withdrawal.

Stoltenberg said Russia continues to restrict navigation in the Black Sea, including near the Kerch Strait, which has been a flashpoint between Russian and Ukrainian warships in recent years.

Moscow announced last month that it will block all foreign naval vessels from transiting the strait until October, saying that it would be conducting further land and sea exercises in

the area.

The decision was immediately denounced by Washington and Kyiv. Ukraine described it as an escalation of Russia’s efforts to destabilize the nation because it would prevent access to its ports in the Sea of Azov, which is connected to the Black Sea through the Kerch Strait.

Stoltenberg said NATO would continue to support its partners in the region, saying the Russian moves were “part of a pattern of aggressive actions, which raise serious concerns.”

The two leaders also sharply criticized the detention Sunday of an opposition journalist from Belarus who was pulled off a Ryanair jet that was diverted to Minsk, in what Western leaders have called a case of state-sponsored hijacking.

Follow-up probe into virus' origins sought

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The United States' top health official called Tuesday for a swift follow-up investigation into the coronavirus' origins amid renewed questions about whether the virus jumped from an animal host into humans in a naturally occurring event or escaped from a lab in Wuhan, China.

Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra told an annual ministerial meeting of the World Health Organization that international experts should be given "the independence to fully assess the source of the virus and the early days of the outbreak."

Becerra's remarks, which were prerecorded, signaled that the Biden administration would

continue to press the WHO to expand its investigation to determine the virus' origins.

Additionally, Biden on Wednesday asked the intelligence community to redouble its efforts to determine the virus' origin. In a statement, Biden said he has asked for a report within 90 days and hopes the intelligence community "will collect and analyze information that could bring us closer to a definitive conclusion."

In his statement, Biden said a report he received last month said the intelligence community has "coalesced around two likely scenarios" but has not reached a definitive conclusion about whether the virus emerged from human contact with an animal or from a lab ac-

cident.

As the coronavirus ravaged the U.S. and much of the world last year, an early theory was that it emerged from a market in Wuhan that sold meat from wild animals raised in captivity and then swiftly spread across the globe. Experts in viral genome evolution determined that it almost certainly was not engineered as a bioweapon because it has several naturally occurring features and is closely related to a 2014 coronavirus that came from a bat in a cave in China. But they also said they could not rule out that the virus may have escaped from the Wuhan Institute of Virology, a research lab that studies coronaviruses.

While the lab leak theory was

initially dismissed as unlikely, recent reports about the hospitalization of Wuhan lab researchers in November 2019 — weeks before the virus was identified in that city — have given it new traction. A WHO-led team concluded in February that a lab leak was extremely unlikely after visiting the Wuhan facility, but some international scientists and researchers said the findings were tainted by politics and called for further investigation.

At a White House briefing Tuesday, Anthony Fauci, the government's leading infectious disease expert, said he believes it's most likely the virus originated from a "natural occurrence." But he said a deeper probe is warranted.

Moderna: Vaccine works for kids as young as 12

Associated Press

Moderna said Tuesday that its COVID-19 vaccine strongly protects kids as young as 12, a step that could put the shot on track to become the second option for that age group in the United States.

With global vaccine supplies still tight, much of the world is struggling to vaccinate adults in the quest to end the pandemic. But earlier this month, the U.S. and Canada authorized another vaccine — the shot made by Pfizer and BioNTech — to be used starting at age 12.

Moderna aims to be next in line, saying it will submit its teen data to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and other global regulators early next month.

The company studied more than 3,700 12- to 17-year-olds. Preliminary findings showed the vaccine triggered the same

signs of immune protection in kids as it does in adults, and the same kind of temporary side effects such as sore arms, headache and fatigue.

There were no COVID-19 diagnoses in those given two doses of the Moderna vaccine compared with four cases among kids given dummy shots. In a press release, the company also said the vaccine appeared 93% effective two weeks after the first dose.

While children are far less likely than adults to get seriously ill from COVID-19, they represent about 14% of the nation's coronavirus cases.

With plenty of vaccine supply in the U.S., younger teens flocked to get Pfizer's shot in the days after FDA opened it to them, part of a push to get as many kids vaccinated as possible before the next school year.

US bases update rules as virus surges in Japan

BY JOSEPH DITZLER

Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — Japan's latest coronavirus surge spurred U.S. military bases to impose further travel restrictions Wednesday as the nation's two largest metro areas looked at extending their public health emergencies.

Case numbers continued to fall Wednesday in Tokyo and Osaka prefectures, though Japan overall recorded its highest one-day tally of 4,176 new infections, according to public broadcaster NHK.

The U.S. military in Japan by 6 p.m. Wednesday had reported 10 new cases of COVID-19, all at Marine Corps bases on Okinawa. Camp Foster has eight new patients and Camps Kinser and Hansen each have one, according to a Facebook post by Marine Corps Installations Pacific.

Bases in Japan continue to update their travel limits in prefectures where coronavirus conditions are changing and where emergencies are underway.

Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo, for example, permits non-mission essential travel within certain areas with approval by a squadron commander or equivalent until Monday and for leave in Okinawa until June 20, according to a base Facebook post Wednesday.

Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni put all prefectures under emergencies off limits for leave and liberty, according to its Facebook page.

U.S. Army Japan divided emergency prefectures into those of significant risk and those of high risk.

GOP readies \$1T infrastructure response

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senate Republicans revived negotiations over President Joe Biden's sweeping investment plan, preparing a \$1 trillion infrastructure proposal that would be funded with COVID-19 relief money as a counteroffer to the White House ahead of a Memorial Day deadline toward a bipartisan deal.

The Republicans said Tuesday that they would disclose details of the new offer by Thursday, sounding upbeat after both sides had panned other offers.

At the White House, press secretary Jen Psaki declined to address the new plan but said, "We expect this week to be a week of progress."

Talks over the infrastructure investment are at a crossroads as Biden reaches for a top legislative priority. The White House is assessing whether the president can strike a bipartisan deal with Republicans on his American Jobs Plan or whether he will try to go it alone with Democrats if no progress is made in the days ahead.

Yet the administration and the GOP senators remain far apart over the size and scope of the investment needed to reboot the nation's roads, bridges and broadband — but also, as Biden sees it, the child care centers and green energy investments needed for a 21st-century economy. They also

can't agree on how to pay for it.

The Republicans have uniformly rejected Biden's plan to pay for the investments by raising the corporate tax rate, from 21% to 28%. Instead, the GOP senators want to shift unspent COVID-19 relief funds to infrastructure, which may be a nonstarter for Democrats. Republicans also want to rely on gas taxes, tolls and other fees charged to drivers to pay for the highways and other infrastructure.

The Republicans said their new proposal would be aligned with what they discussed with Biden in their first Oval Office meeting almost two weeks ago.

"We are anxious to have a bipartisan agreement," said Sen.

Shelley Moore Capito, R-W.Va., who is leading the group of GOP negotiators.

A GOP aide who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private talks said the price tag would be \$1 trillion over eight years, paid for by tapping funds that have been allocated as part of COVID-19 relief but not yet spent. The aide said about \$700 billion remains in unspent virus aid.

Democrats on Capitol Hill were quick to rebuff dipping into coronavirus relief funds, particularly money that had been sent to the states and local governments that now seems less urgent as some jurisdictions reported better-than-expected balance sheets.

NY prosecutors seat new grand jury in Trump probe

Associated Press

NEW YORK — New York prosecutors have convened a special grand jury to consider evidence in a criminal investigation into former President Donald Trump's business dealings, a person familiar with the matter told The Associated Press on Tuesday.

The development signals that the Manhattan district attorney's office was moving toward seeking charges as a result of its two-year investigation, which included a lengthy legal battle to obtain Trump's tax records.

The person familiar with the matter was not authorized to speak publicly and did so on condition of anonymity. The news was first reported by The Washington Post.

Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr. is conducting a wide-ranging investigation into a variety of matters such as hush-money payments paid to women on Trump's behalf, property valuations and employee compensation.

The Democratic prosecutor has been using an investigative grand jury through the course of his probe to issue subpoenas and obtain documents. That panel kept working while other grand juries and court activities were shut down because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The investigation includes scrutiny of Trump's relationship with his lenders, a land donation he made to qualify for an income tax deduction and tax write-offs his company claimed on millions of dollars in consulting fees it paid.

The new grand jury could eventually be asked to consider returning indictments. While working on that case, it will also be hearing other matters. The Post reported that the grand jury will meet three days a week for six months.

Trump contends the investigation is a "witch hunt."

"This is purely political, and an affront to the almost 75 million voters who supported me in the Presidential Election, and it's being driven by highly partisan Democrat prosecutors," Trump said in a statement.

Vance's office declined to comment.

Attorney General Letitia James said last week that she assigned two lawyers to work with Vance's office on the probe after her civil investigation into Trump evolved into a criminal matter.

James, a Democrat, said her office also is continuing its civil investigation into Trump. She did not say what prompted her office to expand its investigation into a criminal probe.

Senators trying to save legislation on Jan. 6 commission

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senators labored to find a path forward for legislation creating a commission on the Jan. 6 insurrection, debating potential changes in a long-shot attempt to overcome growing GOP opposition.

Republican Sen. Susan Collins and Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin were leading the informal talks Tuesday, according to two people familiar with the effort. The talks were focusing on two issues that Republican senators have cited for their opposition to the House-passed legislation to create the commission — ensuring that the panel's staff is evenly split between the parties and that its work does not spill over into the midterm election year.

Collins and Manchin have traded potential changes to the bill and have consulted with other senators as part of the effort, according to the two people and another person with knowledge of the negotiations. The three people spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private talks.

Absent an agreement on changes, Republicans are expected to block the bill whenever Democrats bring it up for a vote, potentially as soon as this week. Only a handful of GOP senators have indicated they will vote for it, and Democrats appear to be far short of the 10 Republicans they need to bypass a filibuster.

Blinken in Egypt to shore up Gaza cease-fire

Associated Press

CAIRO — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in Egypt on Wednesday as he pressed ahead with a diplomatic mission aimed at shoring up a cease-fire that ended an 11-day war between Israel and the Gaza Strip's ruling Hamas militant group.

Blinken landed in Cairo a day after holding intensive talks with Israeli and Palestinian leaders. In Egypt, he met with President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi and other top officials. Later he was to travel to Jordan to meet with King Abdullah II.

Blinken has vowed to "rally international support" to re-

build the destruction in hard-hit Gaza while promising to make sure that none of the aid reaches Hamas. He is instead trying to bolster Hamas' rival, the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority.

Blinken described Egypt and Jordan as central players in trying to bring calm to the region. Both countries are key U.S. allies that have peace agreements with Israel and frequently serve as mediators between Israel and the Palestinians.

"Egypt played a critical role in helping to broker the cease-fire and Jordan has long been a voice for peace and stability in

the region," he told reporters late Tuesday.

Egypt maintains ties with Hamas, but also enforces a tight blockade on Gaza, along with Israel, with a shared goal of preventing the Islamic group from arming.

Blinken has set modest goals for the trip, his first official visit to the Middle East as secretary of state. The stop in Cairo, along with President Joe Biden's phone talks with el-Sissi while the cease-fire was being negotiated last week, signal a closer relationship between the Biden administration and Egypt after a cooler beginning, when it expressed concern

over el-Sissi's human rights record.

During talks with Israeli and Palestinian leaders on Tuesday, he made clear that the United States has no immediate plans to pursue peace talks between the sides, though he expressed hope for creating a "better environment" that might lead to negotiations.

That could begin with the Gaza reconstruction effort. The 11-day war killed more than 250 people, mostly Palestinians, and caused heavy destruction in the impoverished coastal territory. Preliminary estimates have put the damage in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

Rallies, moments of silence honor Floyd year after death

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — A family-friendly street festival, musical performances and moments of silence were held Tuesday to honor George Floyd and mark the year since he died at the hands of Minneapolis police, a death captured on wrenching bystander video that galvanized the racial justice movement and continues to bring calls for change.

Floyd's sister Bridgett and other family members held a moment of silence at a "Celebration of Life" event at a downtown Minneapolis park with music, food trucks, an inflatable bouncy house and a vaccination stand. A few miles away, at the site of the intersection where Floyd died, dozens of people kneeled around a steel fist sculpture for several minutes — symbolizing the 9 minutes, 29 seconds during which Floyd was pinned down.

"It's been a troubling year, a long year," Bridgett Floyd told the crowd downtown. "But we made it. ... The love is here. George is here."

Other members of Floyd's family met in Washington with President Joe Biden and Vice Presi-

dent Kamala Harris, who urged Congress to quickly pass a law in Floyd's name that would bring changes to policing. A moment of silence to honor Floyd was also held in New York and a rally was held in Los Angeles. Globally, a rally took place in Germany and Floyd's death was marked by U.S. embassies in Greece and Spain.

Hours before the Minneapolis festivities, the place where Floyd died was disrupted by gunfire.

Associated Press video from 38th Street and Chicago Avenue — informally known as George Floyd Square — showed people running for cover as shots rang out. Police said a man, who they believe was injured in the shooting, went to a nearby hospital with a gunshot wound. Police said he was in critical condition but was expected to survive.

The intersection of 38th and Chicago was transformed Tuesday into an outdoor festival, with food, children's activities and music. The celebration also included a candlelight vigil, capping several days of marches, rallies and panel discussions about his death and confronting racial discrimination.

Western US fire season starts drier than 2020

Associated Press

As bad as last year's record-shattering fire season was, the western United States starts this year's in even worse shape.

The soil in the West is record dry for this time of year. In much of the region, plants that fuel fires are also the driest scientists have seen. The vegetation is primed to ignite, especially in the Southwest where dead juniper trees are full of flammable needles.

"It's like having gasoline out there," said Brian Steinhardt, forest fire zone manager for Prescott and Coconino national forests in Arizona.

A climate change-fueled megadrought of more than 20 years is making conditions that lead to fire even more dangerous, scientists said. Rainfall in the Rockies and farther west was the second-lowest on record in April, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

"It means that the dice are loaded toward a lot of forest fire this year," said Park Williams, a UCLA climate and fire scientist,

who calculated that soil in the western half of the nation is the driest it has been since 1895. "This summer, we're going into fire season with drier fuels than we were at this time last year."

In addition, the western drought is deepening week by week.

In late March, less than one-third of California was suffering extreme or exceptional drought. Now, more than 73% is, according to the National Drought Monitor, which is based on precipitation, temperature, soil moisture and stream-flow measurements. A year ago, heading into the record-smashing 2020 fire year when more than 4% of California burned, just 3% of the state was in extreme or exceptional drought.

But the outlook is worse elsewhere.

"I think the Southwest is really primed for a bad fire season," University of Utah fire scientist Phil Dennison said. That's because last year's normal monsoon season, which brings much of the year's rainfall, never showed up.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Vegas chapel offers free nuptials for military

NV LAS VEGAS — A Las Vegas chapel plans to honor the military on Memorial Day by offering a chance to say “I do.”

KVVU-TV reported that the Little Vegas Chapel is offering weddings free of charge Monday for active-duty officers.

The chapel is waiving the cost of a \$129 wedding package which includes a photographer, marriage license and up to five guests. Soldiers can also apply a \$129 credit to another package.

Any interested officers must show proof of their active military status.

Woman gets back thrown out \$1M lottery ticket

MA SOUTHWICK — A Massachusetts woman who accidentally tossed out a \$1 million lottery ticket eventually collected her winnings thanks to the kindness and honesty of the owners of the store where she bought it.

Lea Rose Fiega bought the \$30 Diamond Millions scratch-off ticket in March at the Lucky Stop convenience store in Southwick near where she works.

“I was in a hurry, on lunch break, and just scratched it real quick, and looked at it, and it didn’t look like a winner, so I handed it over to them to throw away,” she said.

“One evening, I was going through the tickets from the trash and found out that she didn’t scratch the number,” Abhi Shah, the son of the store’s owners told WWLP-TV. “I scratched the number and it was \$1 million underneath the ticket.”

Fiega is a regular customer, so the family knew immediately who had discarded it.

The store gets a \$10,000 bonus from the state lottery commission for selling the winning ticket. Fiega said she gave the family an additional reward. She’s saving the rest for retirement.

Parents criticize altering yearbook photos

FL ST. JOHNS — Parents and students are criticizing teachers at a Florida high school for digitally altering photos in a yearbook in order to cover up students whose clothes the school officials deemed too immodest.

The St. Augustine Record reported that 80 students at Bartram Trail High School in northeast Florida had their yearbook photos altered without their consent in order to cover up exposed shoulders and low necklines.

The school’s yearbook coordinator, who is a teacher, decided that the photos were out of dress code and did some of the editing, said Christina Langston, school district spokeswoman.

The school is offering yearbook refunds to anyone who complains about the changes and wants to turn in their yearbook, the schools spokeswoman said.

Woman bit by snake, falls off ladder

NC MOORESVILLE — A North Carolina woman is recovering from a fall off a ladder prompted by a surprise snake bite.

Heatherly Noble was trimming hedges outside the front door of her Mooresville home when a non-venomous black racer emerged from the bush and bit her, news outlets reported.

She said she didn’t realize what caused the pain in her right hand at first but looked down to see the snake “rising up out of the bushes like some sort of demon,” she told

the Winston-Salem Journal.

Footage from a home security camera shows the snake lunged at Noble again, causing her to fall to avoid a second bite.

Attendant loses 2 teeth in assault by passenger

TX DALLAS — A Southwest Airlines flight attendant was assaulted by a passenger and lost two teeth in the attack, according to a union president, who complained to the airline’s CEO about unruly passengers.

“Unfortunately, this is just one of many occurrences,” said the union president, Lyn Montgomery. She said there were 477 incidents of “misconduct” by passengers on Southwest planes between April 8 and May 15.

“The passenger repeatedly ignored standard inflight instructions and became verbally and physically abusive upon landing,” said Southwest spokesman Chris Mainz. He said police were asked to meet the plane when it arrived in San Diego, and the passenger was taken into custody.

Man banned from parks after videos of misconduct

KS WICHITA — Someone who posted videos on TikTok showing a golf cart running over a sign on a Wichita golf course and a person chasing geese from a golf cart has been banned from all of the city’s park facilities for a year.

The city had asked on Twitter for help identifying the culprit. Within a couple hours, the city said it had found the man with 150 followers on TikTok who posted the videos after several people identified him.

City officials didn’t identify the offender publicly but they said he would receive a notice about the ban that extends to May 21, 2022.

The rules violations documented on the social media site included destroying parks department property, disturbing wildlife and possessing alcohol, according to The Wichita Eagle.

2 pets rescued amid blaze at strip mall

MD SOLOMONS — Two pets were saved from a veterinary medical center when a fire broke out at a southern Maryland strip mall, State Fire Marshals said.

Firefighters dispatched for a building fire found the strip mall in Solomons ablaze. Fire departments from Calvert, St. Mary’s and Charles counties responded to bring the fire under control, officials said.

Solomons Veterinary Medical Center was one of the businesses affected by the fire.

Firefighters were able to rescue two pets and no injuries were reported, officials said.

Alligator hunting season to open in August

MS JACKSON — The Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks announced the 2021 Public Waters Alligator Hunting Season will open Aug. 27 and run through Sept. 6.

The application process for the 960 available permits will run from June 1 through June 8, WJTV-TV reported. Permits are limited by a random drawing and an electronic application is required.

The first drawing will take place June 14. Any unpurchased permits from the first drawing will be entered in a second drawing of remaining available applicants.

— From wire reports



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Staal lifts Hurricanes in OT of Game 5

Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — Coach Rod Brind'Amour figured the puck would eventually have to bounce the right way for his Carolina Hurricanes.

Fittingly, his captain was ready when it did.

Jordan Staal scored off a rebound at 2:03 of overtime to give the Hurricanes a 3-2 come-from-behind victory over the Nashville Predators on Tuesday night, pushing Carolina to a 3-2 lead in the first-round playoff series.

Staal was jostling for position just outside the crease when Brett Pesce fired a shot toward Juuse Saros, who made the stop and poked the puck forward. But Staal batted it out of the air and past Saros into the net.

Staal gave a yell and immediately skated backward with his arms outstretched until he reached the boards, where his teammates mobbed him in front of a roaring home crowd of 12,000.

"Not a whole lot of thoughts going through my mind besides

just wanting some bear hugs from the fellas," Staal said.

Staal's score ended what was the third straight game to go to extra time, with the Predators winning a pair of grueling double-overtime contests in Games 3 and 4 in the best-of-seven series. This one, however, moved the Hurricanes within a win of closing it out and advancing in the postseason.

They'll get that chance on the road in Game 6 on Thursday night.

Martin Necas scored twice for Carolina, which flirted with becoming the first team to lose on home ice in the series. In addition to trailing midway through the third period, it had a second-period goal disallowed after a Nashville challenge for goaltender interference.

"I think we got rewarded tonight," Brind'Amour said. "That's the way I look at it. We finally got a bounce, something that went our way that we really haven't had this series. So I think that was nice."

Yakov Trenin scored twice to lead the Predators' offense. Saros finished with 34 saves after racking up 110 stops through the two double-overtime wins that knotted the series at 2-2.

Once again, he repeatedly turned away clean looks by the Hurricanes while his teammates clogged up lanes to block shots or frustrate Carolina's ability to get traffic in front of Saros above the crease until Staal did for the winner.

"It's a tough loss for us," Predators defenseman Roman Josi said. "I mean, I think in the third we kind of were in control of the game and they obviously score. Like I said before, it's such a tight series. ... They just found a way to score in OT tonight."

Necas' night

Necas made a terrific individual effort to get Carolina back in this one.

He charged up the ice on a one-man push, speeding past Matt Duchene to get behind the net and beat Saros with a wrap-

around score to tie it at 12:55 of the third, sending a jolt through the Hurricanes lineup and rowdy home crowd.

Necas' first goal came when he buzzed a puck over Saros' left shoulder for the first-period score on the power play.

Disallowed goal

The Hurricanes' frustrations against Saros only grew when they finally beat the goaltender, only to see the goal nixed.

On the play, Carolina top defenseman Jaccob Slavin — back in the lineup for the first time since Game 1 — fired a shot from near the blue line that bounced off Staal's right skate and into the net to tie it at 2-2 in the second.

But after a replay review, officials overturned the goal. The ruling was Carolina's Warren Foegele — who had touched Saros near the front right of the crease — impaired Saros' ability to play his position back to his left as he tried to slide through a standing teammate in Josi.

Maple Leafs blank Canadiens, take 3-1 series lead

Associated Press

MONTREAL — Alex Galchenyuk had plenty of memorable nights inside the Bell Centre. His latest standout performance pushed his former team to the brink of playoff elimination.

Galchenyuk set up two goals and scored into the empty net against his former team, Jack Campbell made 32 saves in his first playoff shutout, and the Toronto Maple Leafs beat the Montreal Canadiens 4-0 on Tuesday night for a 3-1 lead in their first-round series.

"It's the playoffs, man," Galchenyuk said when asked if he still speaks with anyone on the other team. "You know what time it is right now.

"There's no friends."

Galchenyuk was a healthy scratch in Game 1 before coming into the lineup when captain John Tavares was injured in a scary collision.

"Whatever role our team asks him to play, he comes in and does it tremendously," said Campbell. "It's not easy to come in and out of the lineup, but whenever he's in, he's given us a spark."

Jason Spezza had a goal and an assist and William Nylander and Joe Thornton also scored for Toronto, which can wrap up the best-of-seven series at home Thursday in Game 5. Alexander Kerfoot had three assists.

"Scoring, defending, checking, all the way through the lineup, the guys dug down," said

Maple Leafs head coach Sheldon Keefe. "A lot of great efforts all the way."

Carey Price stopped 24 shots for Montreal. The Canadiens have scored just four times in 12 periods against Campbell in the first playoff series between the teams since 1979.

"We're playing against another team," Montreal head coach Dominique Ducharme said. "If we were going 5-on-0, we'd go up and down the ice the way we want."

The Leafs, who won consecutive postseason games in Montreal for the first time since the 1967 Stanley Cup Final on the heels of Monday's 2-1 victory, haven't advanced to the second round since 2004.

Toronto is 11-1 all-time when

leading a series 3-1 — a situation the Maple Leafs haven't found themselves in since 1987.

If the Canadiens can force a Game 6 in Montreal on Saturday, the Quebec government will allow 2,500 fans into the Bell Centre, which would be the first NHL crowd in Canada since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020.

"We should be hungry next game to come back for our fans," Montreal center Phillip Danault said.

Toronto opened the scoring 1:27 into the second period when Nylander scored his fourth goal in as many games in the series after taking a slick, behind-the-back feed in tight from Galchenyuk on an odd-man rush.

Lakers bounce back, top Suns in Game 2

Associated Press

PHOENIX — The Los Angeles Lakers were reeling late in the fourth quarter on Tuesday night. The Phoenix Suns had made a big run, their home crowd was in a frenzy and the defending NBA champions were in danger of going down two games to none in the first round.

LeBron James and Anthony Davis weren't about to let that happen.

James made a turnaround 18-foot jumper, Davis followed with a three-pointer and the Lakers held on for a hard-fought 109-102 win over the

Suns in Game 2 of the playoff series.

"This was a must win," Davis said. "We all came out with that mindset and we were able to get the job done."

It was a big bounce-back game for Los Angeles, and especially Davis, who struggled in Game 1 and took personal responsibility for the team's 99-90 loss on Sunday. His crucial three-pointer with 2:15 left on Tuesday put his team up 98-92 and ended a late Phoenix rally.

Davis made 18 of 21 free throws and added 10 rebounds and seven assists. James added

23 points and nine assists.

"Those are two of the top five players in the NBA," Lakers coach Frank Vogel said. "We have a formula where those guys carry a big load, especially at crunch time."

James said he wasn't surprised Davis bounced back quickly. He said the team made it a point to get him involved as much as possible.

"Get him the ball early, often and always," James said. "It's that simple."

Game 3 is on Thursday in Los Angeles, and the team suddenly has a lot of momentum.

"That's what I came here

for," James said. "To be able to play a playoff game in front of the Lakers faithful."

Devin Booker led the Suns with 31 points and made all 17 of his free throws. DeAndre Ayton had 22 points, 10 rebounds and shot 11-for-13 from the field. Los Angeles is physically much bigger than Phoenix with Andre Drummond, Davis, James and Marc Gasol all standing 6-foot-9 or taller and tipping the scales at 250 pounds or more. The only player on the Suns' roster close to the size is Ayton. Unlike Game 1, the Lakers usually took advantage of that difference.

Doncic, Mavericks forge 2-0 series lead on Clippers

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — A familiar face sat behind the Dallas Mavericks' bench. Dirk Nowitzki, who led the franchise to its only championship in 2011 during his 21 seasons, came to see his old franchise that hasn't won a playoff series since its title.

Led by Luka Doncic, this edition is looking pretty good.

"I certainly believe him being there tonight was a lucky charm for us," Mavs coach Rick Carlisle said.

Doncic scored 39 points, Tim Hardaway Jr. added 28 and Dallas again outshot the NBA's best three-point team in a 127-121 victory over the Los Angeles Clippers on Tuesday night to take a 2-0 lead in the first-round playoff series.

"We can't rest," Hardaway said. "We know what they're capable of."

Kristaps Porzingis added 20 points and Maxi Kleber had 13. Hardaway hit a playoff career-high six three-pointers and Doncic had five, as the fifth-seeded Mavs were 18-for-34 from long-range. They made 17 three-pointers in winning

Game 1 on Saturday.

"The mentality was go out there, play aggressive, have fun," Doncic said.

The fourth-seeded Clippers were led by Kawhi Leonard, who scored 30 of his 41 in the first half. Paul George had 28 points and 12 rebounds.

"I'm pretty sure everyone expected us to win this," George said. "They're playing free and with confidence, and I think we're giving them a little too much confidence. It's up to us to shut that down."

Leonard added, "Just got to stay focused and keep an eye on the prize. We got to play defense. Too many easy baskets out there for Dallas."

Game 3 is Friday in Dallas, where the Mavs will have several thousand more fans on hand than were allowed at Staples Center.

The Clippers threw just about every body they had at Doncic in an effort to slow the player that burned them with a triple-double in Game 1. But once again, the All-Star got plenty of help from his supporting cast.

Nets get 7 threes from Harris, roll over Celtics

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Brooklyn is more than just its Big Three. There's also Joe Harris and his threes.

Even if a team can contain Kevin Durant, Kyrie Irving and James Harden, it still has to stop the NBA's most accurate three-point shooter.

That's a lot of problems to solve, and Harris understands why teams don't make him the priority.

"I think it's just sort of, this is the reality of the matter," Harris said. "I mean, we have three of the best offensive players that really have ever played."

Harris tied a franchise playoff record with seven three-pointers, Durant scored 26 points and the Nets routed the Boston Celtics 130-108 on Tuesday night for a 2-0 lead in their first-round playoff series.

Harris had a career playoff-high 25 points and Harden added 20 as Brooklyn unleashed its lethal offense after winning Game 1 largely with defense.

"Different games it's going to be different guys," Harden said. "Tonight it was Joe, next game,

Game 3 it could be somebody else. So we're just all locked in, we're all on the same page and whatever it takes to win, we're willing to do."

Game 3 is Friday in Boston, where the Nets will attempt to build on their first 2-0 lead in a series since they swept the New York Knicks in the first round in 2004.

This one might be headed toward the same result, with the Celtics unable to do much scoring in Game 1 or stop Brooklyn from doing tons of it in Game 2.

"We've got to be way better," coach Brad Stevens said, listing a number of defensive problems Boston has to address.

"They exposed that because they were really good, but I was disappointed in how we played versus the other night."

Marcus Smart scored 19 points and Kemba Walker had 17 for the Celtics. Leading scorer Jayson Tatum had only nine points on 3-for-12 shooting before leaving after just 21 minutes when he was poked in the right eye.

Irving had 15 points, six rebounds and six assists for the Nets.

White Sox rout sloppy Cardinals

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Lucas Giolito beat Jack Flaherty in a major league matchup of former high school teammates, leading the Chicago White Sox to an 8-3 defeat of the sloppy St. Louis Cardinals.

The Harvard-Westlake High reunion also had a little history behind the plate, with Joe West working a record 5,376th regular-season game, snapping a tie with Hall of Fame umpire Bill Klem.

Giolito (4-4) pitched six innings of two-run ball in his second straight win, easily getting the better of a shaky Flaherty hurt by another poor defensive performance by the Cardinals.

Flaherty (8-1), leading the majors in wins, lasted just 3½ innings in his shortest outing of the season.

Royals 2, Rays 1: Tampa Bay's 11-game winning streak came to an end when Brad Keller pitched seven strong innings and Salvador Perez hit a tiebreaking RBI single to give visiting Kansas City a victory.

Rich Hill struck out a career-high 13 for the Rays. Tampa Bay's winning streak was the second-longest in club history, one shy of the record set in 2004 by the then-Devil Rays managed by Lou Piniella.

Dodgers 9, Astros 2: Clayton Kershaw pitched into the eighth inning in his first

game against Houston since the 2017 World Series, and Justin Turner hit a two-run homer for visiting Los Angeles.

Kershaw (7-3) allowed a run and four hits in 7½ innings and Chris Taylor drove in two runs as the Dodgers got their eighth straight victory.

Mets 3, Rockies 1: Jacob deGrom struck out nine in a successful return from the injured list and Tomás Nido hit a tiebreaking homer to send depleted New York past visiting Colorado.

Blue Jays 6, Yankees 2: Steven Matz returned to New York with his finest outing in two years, Vladimir Guerrero Jr. hit his major league-leading 16th home run and Toronto earned a road win.

Angels 11, Rangers 5: Shohei Ohtani hit his 15th homer during a six-run burst, Andrew Heaney (2-3) got his first win in eight weeks and Los Angeles beat visiting Texas.

Padres 7, Brewers 1: Joe Musgrove and three relievers combined on a two-hitter and visiting San Diego got to Milwaukee ace Corbin Burnes by matching a season high with six stolen bases.

Cubs 4, Pirates 3: Chicago's Joc Pederson hit two home runs and Jake Arrieta won at Pittsburgh for the third time this season.

Braves 3, Red Sox 1: Pablo Sandoval had three hits in his first game at Fenway Park

since his disastrous tenure with Boston, and Charlie Morton pitched out of early trouble to lead Atlanta.

Mariners 4, Athletics 3: J.P. Crawford had three hits and Seattle center fielder Kyle Lewis made a magnificent catch to save two possible runs in a win at Oakland.

Indians 4, Tigers 1: Aaron Civale dominated Detroit again, taking a shutout into the ninth inning in Cleveland's road victory.

Reds 2, Nationals 1: Eugenio Suarez homered off Washington ace Max Scherzer (4-3) in his first career start as a leadoff hitter, Tyler Mahle allowed three hits in 5½ scoreless innings and Cincinnati won on the road.

Phillies 2, Marlins 0: Vince Velasquez pitched three-hit ball for six innings, Rhys Hoskins homered and Philadelphia won at Miami.

Twins 7, Orioles 4: Rob Refsnyder homered and doubled twice, Jorge Polanco also homered and host Minnesota gave Baltimore its eighth straight loss.

Giants 8, Diamondbacks 0: Evan Longoria had three hits, including a three-run homer, and drove in four runs, Kevin Gausman struck out nine in five innings, and San Francisco won at Arizona to break a three-game losing streak.

West breaks MLB umpiring mark with 5,376th game

Associated Press

CHICAGO — No arguing this: Cowboy Joe is No. 1 on the chart.

Joe West set baseball's umpiring record when the Chicago White Sox beat the St. Louis Cardinals 8-3 on Tuesday night. West was behind the plate for his 5,376th regular-season game, snapping a tie with Hall of Famer Bill Klem.

West, who reached the majors in 1976 and turns 69 on Oct. 31, got his picture taken with his crew before the game started. He also posed for photos with managers Tony La Russa of the White Sox and Mike Shildt of the Cardinals.

After the lineup cards were exchanged, St. Louis pitcher Adam Wainwright walked to the plate to shake West's hand.

West was visited by baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred, former Commissioner Peter Ueberroth and White Sox owner Jerry Reinsdorf. The ump's supporters in the crowd included country music singer Em-

mylou Harris and former NBA center Mark Eaton, a conspicuous 7-foot-4 figure in the postgame picture with West surrounded by an eclectic group of connections from his long career.

"It was tough to hold back a tear or two, but Tom Hanks said there is no crying in baseball, so you can't do it," West said, referring to Hanks' iconic line in the movie "A League of Their Own."

"It was a very nice thing," he said.

The White Sox recognized West's achievement on the scoreboard, and then showed a video with country music star Garth Brooks and some of West's former and current umpiring colleagues offering their congratulations. The crowd responded with mostly boos.

The San Diego Chicken mascot was on hand, too, presenting West with flowers during the game.

The colorful West is perhaps the most famous umpire in major league history,

known for his memorable run-ins with several players and managers over the years, to go along with at least one executive. West said he will decide at the end of the season if he wants to keep working as an umpire.

He also fashions himself as a country music singer and songwriter, leading to the nicknames "Cowboy Joe" and "Country Joe." The Oak Ridge Boys, members of the Country Music Hall of Fame and friends with West, sung the national anthem before his record-breaking game.

West began his big league career at age 23, doing a handful of games in the last month of the 1976 season. His first plate job included Hall of Fame knuckleballer Phil Niekro throwing to young Braves catcher Dale Murphy.

He has worked the World Series six times. He has 193 career ejections — and West himself has run afoul of Major League Baseball on occasion during his long career.